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A N  
E S S A Y  
Towards An  
UNIVERSAL ALPHABET.

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**H**AVING observed a great difficulty in truly writing what is pronounced, or truly pronouncing what is written, either in our own or foreign Languages, by the Ordinary Alphabets now in use, arising either from the want of some Letters, or the differing Pronunciation of the same Character or Letter in differing Languages and the irregularities of its various Sounds in any one Language; I saw a necessity of some such expedient as I have here attempted, *Viz. An Universal Alphabet*, which should contain an Enumeration of all such single Sounds or Letters as are used in any Language, which I have endeavoured by Examining all those Languages, which hitherto I have considered: Altho' this my attempt be not new, but what before by others hath been attempted, yet I hope what herein I have done will not be unuseful.

The Benefits of such a Collection being perfect.

1. Children from their first beginning, being taught and accustomed to the true Expression of all these single Sounds or Letters, will without difficulty be brought to pronounce truly and readily any Language how seemingly difficult. fo-  
ever

ever; for the pretended difficulty to some Persons of Pronouncing some Letters, is only that they have not been accustomed to pronounce them, either single or in conjunction with others: and this difficulty is chiefly in Persons come to Age.

2. It will enable any one, accustomed to the true Pronunciation of this Alphabet, truly to describe the Pronunciation of any Language whatever, that shall in his hearing be distinctly pronounced; so as another also accustomed to this Alphabet, altho' he before never had heard this Language pronounced, shall notwithstanding at first sight of such Writing, be able so truly to pronounce it, that it shall (if at all) very little differ from the Original Pronunciation. Whereas by the use of the common Alphabets, if any strange Language be written, another that's a stranger to that Language, shall never be able truly to pronounce such a Writing, as it should be, or was by the writer intended, nor even the Writer himself sometime after that he hath forgotten what Sound he designed to describe:

3. It will also be useful to perpetuate the true Sounds of any Language, and serve as a standard thereof to after-Ages: For if all the single Sounds expressible, be here Characterized. *And that no one Character have more than one Sound, nor any one Sound be expressed by more than one Character*; it cannot fall out that any Character should be falsely pronounced, but it will soon be discovered; for this false Sound he giveth it, must be the true Sound of some other Letter of this Alphabet: and so none can Erre herein, but he that wilfully or carelessly will do it.

*In this Collection I proceed according to these Rules.*

1. **T**HAT no true single Sound can be truly described or expressed by the Conjunction of any two or more other single Sounds, *Viz.* If a Vowel, by the Conjunction

of other single Vowels, or if a Consonant, by the Conjunction of other single Consonants.

2. That whatever Sound cannot be expressed or described, but by the Conjunction of two or more single Sounds, is no single but a compounded Sound.

3. That in every composition of single Sounds, the particular single Sounds which make up that Composition, ought to be truly and clearly discerned in the Sound of the Composition, otherwise it cannot be truly said to be a Composition, and composed of such single Sounds.

### *The Single Sounds*

Usually named Letters, are commonly distinguished into *Vowels* and *Consonants*. *Vowels* are such as are singly expressible, as, a, e, o, &c. *Consonants* are such as cannot singly be expressed without the Conjunction of a *Vowel*, as, b, d, f, g, &c.

### *Of Vowels.*

The whole number of them are these 14 following, to which, for the better discerning of their Sounds, I have annexed so many words wherein they are expressed, all *English* but three, *Viz.* the 7, 8, 12, because no *English* words occurred to my *Memory*, wherein they are expressed.

1	a as tall	8	ui---muis <i>Lowdutch</i>
2	a---tallow	9	y---tile
3	a---tale	10	o---tone
4	e---tell	11	u---tunne
5	ea--teal	12	u---une <i>French</i>
6	i---till	13	oo---tool
7	u---dure <i>French</i>	14	ou---tould

These

These are the *Vowels*, each of which are long and short.

Short as in the words, God, Man, Sin.

Long as in Ball, Demand, Seen, &c.

### *Of Diphthongs.*

A *Diphthong* in the ordinary use of the Word signifieth a Compound of two Vowels, but those in ordinary so named, are most of them nothing but only single Vowels, as *ea*, *oo*, *ou*, *eo*, *ai*, in the Words *teal*, *tool*, *tould*, *people*, *main*, &c. That these are but single Sounds will appear. if we consider the Sounds of the Vowels singly, that make those supposed Compositions, and then whether those Sounds in Composition will make out the true Sound required ; so as both of them may be clearly discerned in these pretended Compounds. For instance ; in *ea* in *Teal*.

Consider the Sound of *e* in the word *sent*, or in the Word *scene* ; and *a* in the Word *ball*, or in the Word *and*, or in the Word *tale*, and then whether *e*, in either of the two Sounds going before, and *a* in either of the three Sounds following joined together, will make out the true Sound of *ea* in the Word *teal*, if not, then it is a single Sound ; thus, if you proceed to examine all the other, you will I doubt not find the same event, and I believe the true *Diphthongs* and *Triphthong* of the *Greeks* were no other but a true expression of the single Vowels they joined together, but in so short a time, as both or all three were express'd in the time that ordinarily one single *Vowel* was express'd.

# Of Consonants.

**T**He whole number of *Consonants* are these undermentioned, as nigh as I could Collect, by examining all the Languages I am acquainted with, or have heard express'd, and I think but few, if any, single Consonants have escaped my Notice, all which in this following Table have ranged in 11 Files, and 6 Ranks.

1	2	3	4	5
1 B bond	D dark	J Jeft	G Game	=
2 P Pond	T tart	Ch. Chest.	K came	=
3 M mind	N name	gn <i>Seignior</i>	Fr. ng fong	=
4 =	dh this	J <i>Jean</i>	g gaen	} <i>l.d.</i> V Valley
5 =	th thing	fh fhall	ch dach	F Folly
6	n danse	Fr		

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6	7	8	9	10	11
=	L Lane	H hand	Y yarn	R rand	W wand
=					
=					
Z Zeal	h W				
S Seal					
					<i>Fr. sign. Fren.</i>
					<i>Ld. Lowdutch</i>
					<i>W. Welch</i>

The First File containeth three *Consonants*, the Second six, the Third and Fourth ten, the Fifth and Sixth four, the seventh two, the remaining four each one, in all twenty nine *Consonants*.

The second Rank in each File contains Derivatives [so I shall name them] in relation to the First Rank, or their Primitives, all alik in kind, so also all the Derivatives in the Third Fourth and Fifth Ranks, whereby their Sounds will be the better comprehended.

Thofe

Those places filled by two strokes (=) signifie that Sounds may be exprefs'd by the same posture of the Mouth with their Primitives, answering in kind to those in the same Rank wherein they stand, but they would be so like in pronunciation to some others in the Table, that the difference would be too nice for common discernment, and also for that I have not observed them used in any Language I have heard exprefs'd by a perfect Mouth, I thought it needless to characterize them.

As those of the Fourth and Fifth Rank in the First File are like those of the Fourth and Fifth Rank in the Fifth File, and those of the First Second and Third Ranks in the Fifth File, are like those of the same Ranks in the First File, so those of the First, Second, Third Ranks in the Sixth File, are like those of the same Ranks in the Second File.

Some of these above-mentioned twenty-nine *single Consonants*, are vulgarly supposed compounded, as *th, ch, sh, gn, ng, &c.* But if you consider the Sound of each *single Consonant* in the Composition apart, and then the Conjunction of them in that order, so as the *single Sounds* may be clearly discerned in the Composition, you will never make the Sounds required, and if neither by this nor by any other Conjunction the required *sound* can be made out, it must be a single and no compound Sound.

Whereas these single sounds, vulgarly described as Compounds, ought to have single Characters; and Secondly, that some of the single Characters have in the same Language a different Sound, as *c* in the Words, *can, mice*; *g*, in the Words *George, Game, &c.* and also a different Sound in different Languages, as *I* Consonant differently exprefs'd in several Languages, as in *English, Low Dutch, French Spanish*: and Thirdly, that some *single sounds* are differently characterized in the same Language, as the Sound of *j* in *same* and *c* in *mice*; (the same Sound by two different Characters;) so also *c* in *can*, and *k* in *kind* the same, &c. and the same also in different Languages, as *ch* in the *French Word chose* and *sh* in the Word *shall*, the same, &c. It will be impossible

fible in the use of the present Characters or Alphabets, to add those wanting, and to correct and limit the Sound of others in use; thereby to constitute a perfect Alphabet, because people so long accustomed, or habituated to such corrupt and differing Expressions of the present Characters, will be always subject on the sight of the old, to give them those Sounds they have been used to, and to spell words according to their old and corrupt Custom, whatsoever Rules shall be set to the contrary; and therefore there will be a necessity of a whole new Set of Characters, both of *Vowels*, and *Consonants*.

Hitherto I have endeavoured to make a Collection of all the single Vowels and Consonants, which are used in any Language; in which, if I have not collected all those that are, yet in the method I have used therein, I hope I have attained nigher to it, than any other Collection extant. I have likewise shown the necessity of a new Set of Literal Characters, & such a one is this I here propose; First the Set of Consonantal Characters, are to be seen in the top of Page (137) being ranged in the same method and order with those in the foregoing Table. The first Rank in every file are those I name Radical Characters, the other succeeding Ranks have each a distinct Characteristical Addition to distinguish them from one another, which causeth some complication; but yet I judged it necessary to express the same in the Character, the more regularly to sort them into Classes, and to express the derivation of Letters of the same Organe, the one from the other.

The Set of Vocal Characters is likewise in the same Page with the Consonants; in writing they are to be placed over the Consonants, which they follow in Expression; and whereas some Syllables begin with a Vowel, place the 12th Consonantal Character, answering to the *Hebrew*, *Aleph*; and over the same place the Vowel beginning such a Syllable.

This Character may seem somewhat too complicate for dispatch in ordinary Writing, but for Printing it will be

the same with that now used, and I only designed it for that purpose, but for the Pen, others more convenient may be invented.

To distinguish the long Vowel from the short, add a prick to the vocal Character.

The 9. 11. 12. 13. 14th vocal Characters, are (for want of single strokes) compounded of the first and second.

The Diphthongues truly such (as I have before noted in the first Part) may be made by the Conjunction of the Single Vocal Characters in the order as they follow, and will be easily distinguished from the 5 foregoing compounded Characters of the single Vowels, because there will not lightly occur any Diphthongs compounded of the first two Vowels.

The Accent may be a thwart line under the Syllable that is to be accented.

The 4 Marks of pauses ordinarily used, namely , ; : . may be continued.

The Characters signifying the various Modes of Expression may be these following, and ought to be placed at the beginning and end of every Sentence requiring it.

[ ]	Explication.	} {	?	Interrogation.
( )	Parenthesis.		!	Wonder.
! !	Emphasis.		¿	Irony.



*A Second Essay concerning the* UNIVERSAL  
PRIMER.

**A**S the present Alphabets are imperfect, (as in the foregoing Essay is declared,) so are also the Primers or first Books, wherein Children and others are taught to Spell and Read, first in not having a perfect Alphabet. Secondly in not being digested in such a Method as is fit and proper to teach them, as they ought to be taught, for the usual way of teaching to spell, is to dismember every syllable (of more than one Letter) into many Syllables, by expressing every Letter apart, and Syllabically, and the Consonants with such a Vowel as they are ordinarily named with, and then requiring them to join all these Syllables into one word, but how preposterous this method is, one instance for all will manifest, suppose the monosyllable *Brand* be to be spelled, they will teach them thus to dismember it *Bee, er, a, en, dee*, and then require them to joyn these into one Syllable, which it is impossible to do, and they must be necessitated as they have begun, to express this one Syllable by five Syllables, which was not designed, whereas they should teach them to express every Syllable entire at first sight, without dismembring it. And to do this, they must proceed gradually, first beginning with the most simple Syllables, and so by degrees proceeding to the more difficult and Compounded, till they can readily pronounce a whole Syllable at first sight, even the most difficult that are.

To that end, let all the Primers be thus contrived; at the top of the leaf, let all the Vowels be placed singly in order as they follow in one Rank, and under the same place, Syllables, first, of one Vowel and one Consonant, following it throughout all the Variations; then of one Consonant and one Vowel following, *2dly*, of two Consonants before, and one Vowel following throughout the Variations. *3dly*, of one Vowel and three or four Consonants

fonants following. And of three Confonants going before, and one Vowel following. *4thly* of one, two or three Confonants going before a Vowel, and one two, three, or four Confonants following. *5thly*, of some Syllables with Diphthongs or Triphthongs. For Instance,

*a. e. i. o. u. &c.*  
*ab. eb. ib. ob. ub. &c.*  
*ad. ed. id. od. ud. &c.*  
*ba. be. bi. bo. bu. &c.*  
*ald. eld. ild. old. uld. &c.*  
*dra. dre. dri. dro. dru. &c.*  
*balm. belm. bilm. bolm. bulm. &c.*

After this place, a number of words of two, three, or four Syllables, from the more easie to the most difficult expressions, without heed to their Significations.

Further let there follow some words of several Syllables, with the Accent variously placed, as on the first, second, third, &c.

Let there be two or three small Discourses writ with this Alphabet, in so many several Languages, with the Accent rightly placed, and truly distinguished by their pauses. And thus you have a perfect Primer for the Design.

### *Of teaching with this Primer.*

First, begin to teach them the true sound of all the Vowels singly, then proceed to the following single Syllables, beginning with the easiest of Expression, and so proceed on gradually to the most difficult, and then to the words of more Syllables, and lastly, to the use of the Accent and Pauses; when the learner hath past all these, you may exercise him in the reading of the following Discourses, and therein let

him exactly observe the Accent and the Pauses, and hitherto it will not be Material, whether the Syllables be significant or not, or whether they understand the small discourses or no, for hitherto we suppose them by this instruction, only capable of Reading or uttering exactly whatsoever is written in this Alphabet and Character, in what Language soever, which is the design of this Primer.

And to gain a greater readiness and habit herein, teach them to write truly what they hear distinctly expressed, according to this Alphabet, proceeding therein gradually as before, and rightly to place the Accent and Pauses, and also the use of the Signes of the different modes of speaking.

*In Teaching, Observe these necessary Rules.*

1. Proceed leisurely and orderly. Suffer them not to pass by any mispronunciation uncorrected, from the beginning to the end, cause them so oft to repeat a wrong pronunciation, till with your assistance they pronounce it truly, allowing for the natural defects in the Speech of some persons, the younger will learn these pronunciations more easily, but the elder may attain them also, although with more difficulty.

2. Suffer them at no hand in spelling, to dismember any Syllable by repeating the Letters singly, but that they pronounce them whole as they find them.

Think not this method tedious, the end will crown and reward the labour, and what the learner hath thus attained and habituated himself to, will remain with him all his life time.

This new Primer will without change except in the Title, be the same for all Nations and Languages.

The following Page gives the Alphabet and Character mentioned in this Discourse, with the Lords Prayer in English, written therein as a Specimen.

## 137

<i>The Table of Vowels</i>											
1	∧	a	2	/	a	3	-	a	4	ε	e
5	ɔ̃	ēa	6	i	i	7	u	u	8	ɥ	ū
9	ɣ	ɣ	10	o	o	11	v	u	12	ēu	ēu
13	∧	ōō	14	>	ōu						

*The Lords Prayer in English*

[illegible]